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National Intelligence Bulletin

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August 28, 1975

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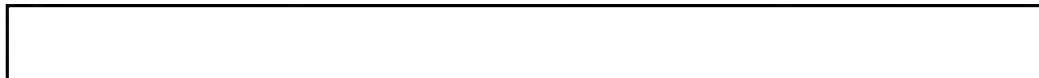
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ARGENTINA

President Peron has bowed to intense pressure from army corps commanders and replaced their discredited commander in chief, General Numa Laplane, according to press reports from Buenos Aires. Peron's acceptance of the general's resignation raises Chilean hopes that the two-week crisis in the armed forces can now be resolved.

Named to replace Numa Laplane was General Jorge Videla, commander of the joint army staff. Peron reportedly made the decision after lengthy meetings yesterday with cabinet members, party and labor leaders, and key military officers. Videla was among those officers leading the move to oust Numa Laplane. His accession to the post means that at least one officer senior to him was forced into retirement.

Numa Laplane was under fire from top army commanders for allowing Colonel Vicente Damasco, an active-duty officer, to accept the post of interior minister. Damasco this week retired from the army under pressure from the military.

The conflict with the military, which appears to be subsiding, was only the latest in a series of crises that have rocked the Peron government since the demise of social welfare minister and presidential adviser Lopez Rega two months ago. As long as Peron remains in office, succeeding crises seem inevitable because of her lack of leadership and susceptibility to manipulation. [REDACTED]

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RHODESIA

Prime Minister Ian Smith is primarily responsible for the failure earlier this week of settlement talks with black nationalist leaders.

In what was a longer initial session than many observers and Smith himself had predicted, the black leaders apparently made an important concession to Smith to keep the talks going. Although the nationalists have long maintained they would not hold discussions inside Rhodesia, they reversed themselves and agreed to meet in committees there.

Smith, probably taken back by this unexpected concession, refused a long-standing nationalist demand that he guarantee safety from arrest for two key nationalist leaders to return to Rhodesia for the committee sessions. At this point, the meeting broke off.

South African Prime Minister Vorster, whose heavy pressure on Smith was largely responsible for the meeting at Victoria Falls this week, has not indicated his reaction to Smith's adamant stand. Pretoria can still exert heavy economic pressure on Rhodesia if Vorster decides to press Smith further. [REDACTED]

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ETHIOPIA

The ruling military council is dealing firmly with dissident students whose unruliness threatens to disrupt the celebrations on September 12 marking the first anniversary of the ouster of the late Haile Selassie.

The council has arrested over 1,000 students and issued stern warnings against student demonstrations. It has also warned parents they will be held responsible for their children's actions. The council reportedly is prepared to order more mass arrests to prevent the students from disrupting the coming anniversary.

The crackdown in Addis Ababa came after students assigned to assist in the implementation of the council's urban land nationalization program recently engaged in serious disturbances on the main university campus. Some also staged a three-day work stoppage.

Large numbers of students participating in the rural development effort have defied the council and returned to the capital from the hinterlands, where they were sent to instruct the peasants. [redacted]

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[redacted]
Although some of the unrest has apparently stemmed most directly from grievances over minor issues, the demonstrations reflect increasing student discontent with the council's rule. Many students are radical leftists agitating for a more doctrinaire socialist government and a return to civilian rule. They reportedly believe that the council has made only minimal improvements in the peasants' standard of living and that the large expenditures on the anniversary celebrations are unwarranted. Most students simply dislike living in the rural areas.

Although council members are probably unified in their determination not to let student agitation get out of hand, they are divided on some of the issues the students have raised, especially the question of how far and fast to proceed with implementing a socialist regime. These divisions could sharpen if student unrest continues.

* * * *

The death of Haile Selassie at the age of 83 early yesterday morning has caused almost no reaction. He probably died of heart failure, although Addis Ababa implied his death was the result of complications from prostate gland problems. He underwent prostate surgery last May. The US embassy received a reliable report last week that Haile Selassie was well physically and alert; according to yesterday's broadcast, his health began deteriorating three days ago. [redacted]

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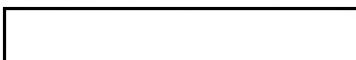
BAHRAIN: The Emir issued a decree on Tuesday dissolving the National Assembly. An accompanying order suspending an article of the constitution that calls for new assembly elections within two months of dissolution suggests the ruling family intends to do without a legislature indefinitely. There have been no reports of opposition to the Emir's action. [REDACTED]

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